

REMARKS

Claims 1-11, 14, 15, 17 and 18 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1-4, 14, 15 and 18 are amended. The amendments introduce no new matter. Claim 16 is canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited in that claim. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowability regarding claim 16. This claim is indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. The amendments to the claims are taken in light of this indication of allowability. Specifically, independent claims 1, 14 and 15 are amended to include the indicated-allowable subject matter of now-canceled claim 16.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed below; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; and (c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to an indication of allowability raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-11, 14, 15 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP-A-2000-025417 (hereinafter "JP '417") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,088,535 to Potts et al. (hereinafter "Potts") and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0047266 to Yang; and rejects claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP '417, Potts, Yang and further in view of JP-A-07-257111 (hereinafter "JP '111").

Without conceding the interpretation, or application, of the applied references, and solely to advance prosecution of this application, the independent claims are amended to

include the indicated-allowable subject matter of now-canceled claim 16. The amendments to the independent claims obviate the rejections of those claims and the claims depending therefrom.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-11, 14, 15, 17 and 18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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